



FACE TO FACE

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

When we explore the life of Moses, we witness his incredible journey marked by face-to-face encounters with God, personal struggles, and the challenges he faced while leading the Israelites.

In this devotional, we'll learn how to hold on to God's promises even when we find ourselves wandering in the wilderness, feeling lost and stuck. We'll reflect on God's unwavering covenant—His promise that shapes our identity and calls us to be His people. As we witness Moses' life, we'll uncover what it means to surrender to God's mission, leading to a profound impact that lasts beyond our lifespan.

As believers, we are called to keep Jesus at the center of our lives. We must keep Jesus at the center of our church and keep Jesus at the center of our nation. My hope is that these devotionals will help keep Jesus at the center of your life, strengthen your faith, ignite your hope, and reassure you that God is leading us toward His promised future. Join us as we take a deep dive into the life of Moses and discover the timeless lessons that await us on this extraordinary journey!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryan Jones', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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DAILY PRAYER AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

"... Our Father in heaven..."

Matthew 6:9b (NLT)

- **What do You want to say to me today as my Father?**

"... may Your name be kept holy."

Matthew 6:9c (NLT)

- **What do You want to reveal to me about Your power today?**

"May Your Kingdom come soon."

Matthew 6:10a (NLT)

- **Help me make Your priorities my priorities today.**

"Give us today the food we need,"

Matthew 6:11 (NLT)

- **Is there anything specific You want me to do with my time or the people I'm around today?**

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"

Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

- **Reveal to me anyone I need to forgive or ask for forgiveness.**

"And don't let us yield to temptation..."

Matthew 6:13a (NLT)

- **Is there anywhere I'm vulnerable to temptation?**

LOOKING FOR A FACE

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face...

Deuteronomy 34:10 (NIV)

I heard a Bible teacher once say, *We come into the world looking for a face.* That was an interesting concept I'd never heard before, but as I considered the statement, it started to make sense. Think about it. On the day we're born, we search for a face to look back at us, to give us our name, and to tell us who we are. As babies, we long for a face to comfort us when we're unsettled, to assure us we're not alone, and to let us know we're seen and loved and cared for.

As we grow, the desire for faces in our lives multiplies because central to the longing for a face is the longing for relational connection with the people around us. However, we're not just wired to connect with the faces of other people. We're spiritually wired to connect with the face of God. I know that may feel like an abstract concept, since we can't see the physical face of God, but we can experience the intimacy and closeness with God represented by a face-to-face relationship.

You see, God didn't set the world in motion and then leave us to fend for ourselves. He's not distant and unknowable as some believe Him to be. He wants to be known. He turns His face towards us and invites us into relationship with Him. It's in His presence that we grasp who we really are and find the love and security our hearts crave.

Moses lived this reality. The Bible tells us that no one walked face-to-face with God like Moses. This is also the relationship God desires to have with you. By observing Moses' life over the next seven weeks, we'll learn how we, too, can walk intimately with God and know Him face to face.

APPLICATION: Take a moment and ask God to deepen your intimacy with Him through this series on the life of Moses.

PRAYER: God, may it also be said of me that I know You face to face. Draw me deeper into relationship with You. Amen.

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.
Exodus 33:11a (NIV)

Take a minute and think of a public figure you'd love to be friends with. Maybe it's an actor or a musician, or it could be an athlete or an influencer. Now, what's the likelihood you could text that person and arrange to hang out? I'd say pretty slim. They most likely have a team of people limiting access to their presence, so you're left to admire them from a distance and hear what they're like secondhand from others.

Sadly, a lot of people translate this mentality onto a relationship with God. Many view God like an unrelatable celebrity that only privileged people can get close to. But that's not the God of the Bible. From the beginning, God has been in pursuit of ordinary people, making Himself known in different ways. Throughout much of the Old Testament, God spoke to prophets through visions and dreams, but He took a different approach with Moses.

Exodus 33:11 describes the conversations between God and Moses like those of friends speaking face to face. Now, Moses didn't actually see the physical face of God. To do so would lead to death (Exodus 33:20). The language face-to-face conveys Moses being in the presence of the personhood of God. He experienced an intimacy and closeness with God like no other man of his time. He openly and honestly communicated directly with God the same way one speaks to a friend. Moses brought his unfiltered passion, his questions, his frustrations, his confessions and his praise to God and the two dialogued through it all together.

Moses was unique in his day, but this is the kind of relationship God wants to have with you today! God is not a celebrity that you have to wonder what it's like to be friends with. You don't have to admire Him from a distance or hear what He's like from other people. You can come boldly into His presence today in the name of Jesus (Hebrews 4:14-16). He wants to be with you, and He's the one sending you the invitation.

APPLICATION: Believe that the God of the Universe wants to speak to you and be your friend.

PRAYER: God, what a privilege it is for You to call me friend. Like Moses, I want to experience the intimacy of close friendship with You. Amen.

PLACE

Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. ... As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses.

Exodus 33:7, 9 (NIV)

When making plans to meet someone face-to-face, one essential decision must be made. Where will you meet? Whether deciding on a restaurant, picking a park or extending an invitation to your home, establishing a place is foundational for any meeting.

This holds true in our relationship with God. In Exodus 33, we see Moses demonstrate the essential practice of selecting a place to meet with God. Verses 7-9 tell us that Moses would pitch his *Tent of Meeting* some distance outside the Israelites' camp. Notice the intentionality in this act. Moses chose to create a place away from distractions where he could inquire of and hear from the LORD alone. This practice fueled his intimacy with God.

What about you? Have you established a place to meet with God? It doesn't have to be fancy. After all, Moses used a tent. God has a way of making ordinary things extraordinary when His presence shows up.

It could be a place in your home, such as a study, a porch, a closet or even a favorite chair, early in the morning before the rest of your house wakes up. For some people, their car provides the space to break away from everything and meet with God as they drive. Other folks find deep communion with God while being outside on a walk or a jog.

The place itself can be as varied as your personality and circumstances. The key here is the intentional act of pulling yourself away from the hustle and distractions of life and creating space to connect with God. That's not to say that God can't speak to you at any point throughout the day. He certainly can and does because His Spirit is always with you, but carving out purposeful time to meet with God one-on-one will take the intimacy and closeness of your relationship with God to a deeper level.

APPLICATION: Establish your meeting place with God and set aside 10-15 minutes to spend time with Him there today.

PRAYER: God, I acknowledge Your presence in this place. I come here today with a great desire to connect with You. Speak what You want me to know today. Amen.

PASSION

Then Moses said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."
Exodus 33:15 (NIV)

You know that feeling when you say something and then immediately want to take it back? Well, that was me right after I told God, *I know You're with me and all, but I don't just want Your Presence. I want You to fix this.* The words pierced my soul as soon as they left my mouth, and I experienced an undeniable realization that my heart had shifted to wanting what God could do for me more than wanting God. With a repentant heart, I asked God to renew a right spirit in me and confessed that His presence is indeed my far greater need and desire.

I imagine you have your own moments when you come to God more interested in what He can do for you than in His presence with you. It's a good practice to continually examine our motives and ask ourselves *am I going to God to get God, or am I going to God to get things?*

Moses was a man who could answer that he was going to God to get God. The miracles, the blessings and the victorious outcomes from God all ranked second to having God's Presence with him. We see this in Exodus 33. In verses 1-3, we find the Lord directing Moses to set out with the people toward the Promised Land. An angel would lead them and drive out the other inhabitants of the land. The Lord would bless them with a home and an abundant living. However, God would not be going with them due to His anger over their sin in the golden calf incident detailed in Exodus 32.

Moving forward without the presence of God was unthinkable to Moses. All the blessings and power in the world meant nothing to him without God, and in Exodus 33:15, we find Moses interceding on behalf of Israel to come with them. He didn't want the Promised Land without the Promise Keeper. He didn't want the blessings without the Blessor. He was a man whose greatest passion was to be near God.

APPLICATION: If you've been going to God to get things, confess that to Him, and ask Him to make His presence your greatest passion.

PRAYER: God, I want to want You more than anything. Ignite a passion for Your presence in my soul. Amen.

PERSPECTIVE

Moses said, "Please show me Your glory." And He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you My name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."
Exodus 33:18-19 (ESV)

A few years ago, my family experienced a miraculous answer to an outpouring of prayers, and the words *God is so good* effortlessly surged from my soul. But soon I started to wonder, what if the situation went the other way? What if God didn't answer in alignment with my definition of good? Would I so passionately declare His goodness? Oh, I pray so. That, however, requires understanding God's goodness, which runs far deeper than positive outcomes and favorable circumstances. Of course, God deserves adoration and praise for His goodness and grace in fruitful seasons when our hearts bubble with gladness, but God is not *more good* when things go *right* and *less good* when things go *wrong*.

God is good because His very nature is good. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God responded by displaying His goodness and proclaiming His name. God could have chosen anything to display His glory to Moses, but He chose goodness so that Moses' first understanding of God was that He is good. His glory lies in His goodness. All other aspects of His character, such as His power, justice, mercy and grace, flow out of this goodness.

This encounter gave Moses the right perspective of God. He understood both the awesome glory and the supreme goodness of God's nature. This perspective is critical for us to grasp today in order to protect our intimacy with God during circumstances that we consider not so good. Our feelings, opinions and situations don't determine God's goodness. Even in the things we consider not so good, He remains good and is working out His plans for His glory and our good.

APPLICATION: What measure have you been using to gauge God's goodness, and how has that impacted your relationship with God?

PRAYER: God, You are good, and You do good (Psalm 119:68). Help me maintain this perspective of You no matter what is happening around me. Amen.

TRANSFORMATION

And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Exodus 3:6 (ESV)

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

Exodus 34:29 (ESV)

Exodus 3:6 and 34:29 present us with what you might call a *how it started* versus *how it's going* snapshot of the life of Moses. Scripture tells us that when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. That's right. The man we've been studying as our example of intimacy with God started out hiding his face in fear of God. Fast forward to Exodus 34, and we find Moses' face shining after having spent forty days and nights on Mount Sinai talking with God.

This goes to show us that it doesn't matter how you start. Intimacy with God is possible. As Moses stepped forward in obedience to what God called him to do and made himself available to God, he came to know God more deeply by experiencing God's work through him. This produced both an inner transformation between him and God and an outer transformation that others could see. By Exodus 34, Moses' face literally radiated after having been in the presence of God, and everyone around him noticed.

A life lived in the company of God can't help but shine. As you walk closely with God, your desires, attitudes and behaviors begin to transform, and your life will reflect His glory to the world around you. You may not even realize you're changing, but don't minimize the shift. It's often a *one degree of glory to another* kind of change, as 2 Corinthians 3:18 puts it. One degree doesn't sound like a lot, but one degree a day over a lifetime will add up to a radical transformation.

APPLICATION: Which face of Moses do you identify with more today: hiding from God, or shining from God? Wherever you are today, ask the Lord to move you one degree.

PRAYER: God, I want my life to radiate Your glory. May it be obvious to everyone around me that I walk closely with You. Keep transforming me from one degree of glory to another. Amen.

LOOKING IN...

And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Romans 8:27 (NIV)

This morning, I woke up to the familiar feeling of defeat. Tears streamed down my face and blurred my vision as I reflected on the previous day's events. My hands were shaking, and my legs were unsteady. My head was full of confusing thoughts; nothing was making sense. Fatigue rolled over me like an ocean wave. I was *here...* again. I had asked God for help again yesterday, yet here I was... again. My intentions were good, but my results were not what I had expected. I was once again swayed by the voices and thoughts that convinced me that things would never change. I really had not asked God for help; I feebly offered up some hopeless prayers and kind of hid from Him... again.

Since I had a hard week, I felt like I deserved a break from all the responsibilities of my life and just kind of numbed out by death scrolling on my phone. I could start over again tomorrow with my good intentions to be a good person. And here I was, again, starting over for what seemed like the thousandth time.

I needed extra-strong coffee as I tried to shake the cobwebs from my mind. As I took a sip, I noticed my phone reminding me that my Bible daily reading plan was three weeks behind. As if I couldn't feel worse, this certainly did just that. How had I drifted so far from God? What good was I to Him or anyone else, for that matter? I started to turn my phone off... and yet... something was drawing me to open the app and read the words that popped up...

APPLICATION: Regardless of how things have been going in your life, spend a moment with God asking Him to remind you how valuable you are to Him. Reach out to a friend to pray for you to believe what He says about you.

PRAYER: Father, as I look inward, show me that my value lies in who You say I am and not my own thoughts or the words of others. Thank You for loving me with an eternal love. Amen.

LOOKING OUT...

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV)

I realize that God often draws me to look in after reading my devotion. I got ready for work and was still a bit fuzzy, but there was a sense that things were clearing up again. Was it the coffee or the Scripture? Honestly, I couldn't tell, but I was glad I was feeling better. As I looked out the window in my living room, I noticed the sun was shining brightly. The promise of a new day was present. Part of me enjoyed the sun on my face while I also squinted my eyes at the brightness of the light. Funny, that's how I felt reading the Bible: part of me enjoyed the truth I was receiving, and part of me wanted to recoil from it. I felt exposed. I felt vulnerable. Part of me wanted to *hide*.

As I got into my car, I wondered if other people struggled the way I did. Were their lives as disorganized as mine? Did they wonder about God's love for them? When I looked at other people in their cars driving to work, I imagined they all had it together. Their kids were well behaved; their marriages were awesome; they had strong relationships with God. Before I knew it, that defeated feeling came back as I compared myself to the imagined lives of other people. I've often heard the concept that comparison kills. I could relate to that at that very moment. My mind knew no one had a perfect life, but my heart was pulling me down because of my mistakes. I really needed some encouragement and hope. Maybe a good day at work would help.

APPLICATION: As you notice other people today, pray for them. If you have a chance, ask them how you can pray for them. Thank God that you have access to Him at any time to pray.

PRAYER: Father, bless those around me today. Give them more of You. Let them experience the love of their Father. Amen.

LOOKING BACK...

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past."

Isaiah 43:18 (NIV)

Spending my commute to work looking outward, I was determined to have a good day. The second cup of coffee was doing its job, and I was fired up! I started the workday with some momentum. I was answering emails and calling people. My inbox quickly became my outbox as I was being productive. Then my supervisor asked to see me. I was still on my caffeine high as I skipped down the hall to her office. She asked me to sit down and showed me some numbers related to my department... and they were below average. My supervisor told me there was time to pull the numbers up, and then she said, *I know you can do better than what these numbers show.*

My caffeine high disappeared instantly as I felt my neck get red and my face flush. I felt like I was being chastised like a child, but in my head, I knew my supervisor was being encouraging.

I don't remember much about the rest of the conversation, but as I walked back to my office, I remembered a similar experience in sixth grade when my teacher called me to her desk to talk about my grade on a test. The same feeling had come over me then as it had just now. I *felt* like I was a failure. I knew I wasn't a failure, but it felt true to me. My sixth-grade teacher, one of my favorite teachers ever, was trying to encourage and help me, but I interpreted her actions as pointing out to me that I was a failure. I felt myself not only looking back in time but literally like I was knocked backward. More coffee or caffeine wouldn't help this; only God could help, but would He be there for me? Was I worth the help?

APPLICATION: Spend some time with God asking Him to give you a truthful perspective about yourself. If there are areas to work on, ask Him for help. If there are areas that are excellent, accept the praise from your Heavenly Father!

PRAYER: Father, thank You for guiding me into all truth. As You reveal truth to me about myself, help me receive both the areas that are good and the areas that need growth. Thank You for Your grace and mercies, which are new every day. Amen.

LOOKING FORWARD...

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)

Looking backward can take its toll. It took me a bit of time to regain my footing after the conversation with my supervisor. Why was I so affected by that conversation? My supervisor was respectful, even kind, but her words wounded me; I felt like I had been cut with a knife. I replayed the conversation in my head over and over. I wish I had said or done something different. I wonder what she thinks of me now. Next time, I'll handle it differently.

The rest of the day was going okay, but not great. Around 4 pm, I started to think about what I was going to do after work that night. I had errands to run, dinner to cook, and people to connect with. A co-worker came into my office for a meeting I had somehow forgotten. I wasn't prepared and was already done for the day in my mind... at least the day at work.

I couldn't focus very well as I thought of my to-do list getting longer and longer: groceries to buy, laundry to wash and fold and put up, bills to pay, catching up on my favorite shows. My body was at work, but my mind was hours into the future. Why can't I be present? I kept getting distracted by what was coming. I don't like it when others don't pay attention to me, but here I was doing the same thing. I didn't offer much at the meeting except apologies. I couldn't wait to leave work and forget my mistakes from that day.

APPLICATION: Get together with a couple of friends and purposely talk about what is going on right now. No phones. Don't talk about what is coming up in the future. Just talk about right now. Enjoy the moment!

PRAYER: Father God, thank You for right now! Thank You for today! Help me experience You in this moment. Amen.

LOOKING DOWN...

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." **Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)**

Looking forward to after-work time. Whew! Finally got out of work. Glad that I finally have some *me* time. I was feeling free for a moment, but then, as I thought about the workday, I became depressed: I got called into my supervisor's office for not meeting our goals, I forgot the meeting at 4 pm, and I remembered all the *stuff* I had to do when I got home. Then, I thought about the day before and how I messed up again; how I made poor choices (again), and how I struggled to wake up on time (again). When will I ever get it right? When will this self-destructive cycle ever end? Probably never.

I felt my shoulders droop, and my energy go away as my thoughts became increasingly negative. The weight of the world was on my shoulders; at least it felt that way. I was feeling crushed physically, mentally and emotionally. I wanted to *escape* this feeling. My secrets were killing me. I secretly didn't believe God could help me or that things would ever change; it was all on me to pull myself out of this hole I was in. I literally almost wrecked my car because I wasn't looking at the road but at the steering wheel... lost in a tornado of pain. I saw on the floorboard evidence of not meeting the goal I had set for myself to clean up this mess of a car! How hard should it be to clean up a car? I felt the shame and guilt well up in me again. I just wanted to be somewhere else; be someone else. I couldn't focus on the road and driving, so I pulled into a parking lot to catch my breath.

APPLICATION: Reflect on a time when you felt down and God met you in that space. How did that make you feel? How did things turn out? Take a few moments to thank God for His care of you.

PRAYER: Father, I pray that You will raise me up as I feel down or sad. Fill me with Your everlasting love. Amen.

LOOKING UP...

I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. **Psalm 121: 1-4 (NIV)**

Sitting in the car with the engine on, I hesitated to enter the store. What was I doing? I felt the urge to go inside and simply be a *responsible adult* by buying some groceries. I wanted to sit in the car and just cry. I also felt the urge to cry out to God for help. Would He help me? Would He be there for me? What if He rejected me? What if He ignored me? There was a battle happening in my mind. I felt like I was going crazy.

And then, in a moment of desperation, I confessed to God all I had been hiding from Him. I confessed my self-destructive actions. I confessed I didn't trust Him. I confessed I hadn't been searching for Him with my heart, my mind and my emotions. The tears came just like they did when I woke up that morning, but this time they were tears of gratitude and relief, instead of regret and guilt. These tears were cleansing me instead of condemning me. These tears were freedom instead of bondage.

I quickly drove home to my family and embraced them in a way I never thought possible. God met me at my deepest place of need and started a tremendous work in my life that night. I'm not sure I understand it all, but I realized something that night: I am loved, and I am His.

How about you?

APPLICATION: Ask God to confirm His love for you. Ask God to show you anything that is standing between you and Him. As He shows you things, connect with a trusted friend to come up with a plan to overcome it.

PRAYER: Father, I praise You for Your goodness and kindness to me. Thank You for rescuing me from death and giving me everlasting life in You, through You and with You. Amen.

THE POWER OF HIS KINGDOM

As Pharaoh and all of his officials watched, Aaron raised his staff and struck the water of the Nile. Suddenly, the whole river turned to blood! The fish in the river died, and the water became so foul that the Egyptians couldn't drink it. There was blood everywhere throughout the land of Egypt. Exodus 7:20b-21 (NLT)

The plagues in Exodus are epic—rivers turned to blood, swarms of frogs and insects, total darkness, and even fire from the sky. It's like something out of a movie. But have you ever thought about what they really meant? God doesn't act randomly; everything He does is intentional. The plagues weren't just a dramatic display of His power and justice—they revealed who He is and how we are called to live as His freed and empowered people.

Take, for example, the first of the plagues: the Nile River turning into blood. To the Egyptian people of that day, the Nile was absolutely essential. It wasn't just the source of their crops and commerce—it also represented the power of their gods. The Nile River was the center of Egypt's power, future and identity. In other words, it was their lifeblood—the most central and essential thing about them.

When God struck Egypt's most important source, He was making a powerful statement: the God of Israel is supreme over all things—over nature, over the future and over every so-called god of the land. Over everything. The Israelites had been enslaved to the standards and rules of another kingdom, one ruled by enemies of God. But in His power and grace, the Lord demonstrated through this first plague that while others may claim power, there is no one higher, stronger or more present than the Lord God Almighty. The Nile River turning to blood was, for the Egyptians, an indictment of their folly. But for Israel, it was a declaration that God was bringing them into a greater Kingdom.

For us today, this story isn't just for the entertainment of children—it teaches us a profound truth: there is nothing in creation—no money, success, comfort, trial, enemy or power—that can compare to Him. Everything on this earth is subject to His power and His Kingdom. The power of our enemies cannot stand when compared to the power of our God.

APPLICATION: Even the Nile, Egypt's lifeblood, was powerless before God. What do I rely on that cannot truly sustain me? How can I let God's presence fill that space today?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to release anything I've placed above You. Teach me to trust Your power and live in the freedom of Your Kingdom. Amen.

GOD'S KINDNESS IN THE PLAGUES

Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
Proverbs 28:14 (ESV)

But Pharaoh again became stubborn and refused to let the people go.
Exodus 8:32 (NLT)

There's a sad reality in the book of Exodus. The plagues were not acts of cruelty, nor was God toying with Egypt and its people; they were opportunities—opportunities to repent, align with God's will, recognize who He is, and respond to Him. Things could have turned out so differently. Instead, the revelation of God's character and power through the plagues only drove Pharaoh further into stubborn rebellion, hardening his heart past the point of no return.

When God reveals Himself through His Word, His creation or His people, we face a choice: to move toward Him or away from Him. Think about it like this: the same rays of the sun can melt wax or harden clay. In the same way, truth can transform us into the image of Christ, or, if we resist it, harden our hearts and push us further from the freedom He offers.

A hard heart grows from misunderstanding God's character, resisting His ways, and refusing to trust His heart for us. When we try to rule our own lives, we slowly drift into the traps the world and the enemy have set. Left to ourselves, we follow our own paths, but every path apart from Jesus leads to death.

Yet the kindness of the Lord leads us to repentance. We do not need to fear when He reveals His truth in our hearts. His mercy shows us His ways, the way to life. When we lose our lives in Him, we truly gain them. Unfortunately, Pharaoh refused the invitations and rejected the opportunities to change the way he thought.

The good news is that God's invitation still stands for us today. His grace is patient, His mercy is new each morning, and His Spirit is always drawing us closer. Each time He speaks or reveals His character, we have another chance to soften our hearts, trust Him more deeply, and be shaped into the likeness of Christ.

APPLICATION: Take a moment to consider how you respond when God reveals Himself—through His Word, creation or others. Are you softening your heart toward Him, or resisting His truth? Ask Him to soften your heart today and guide you closer to His ways.

PRAYER: Father, soften my heart to Your truth. Help me to trust You, follow Your ways, and be shaped more into the likeness of Christ. Amen.

SOVEREIGN OVER ALL

So Aaron raised his hand over the waters of Egypt, and frogs came up and covered the whole land! But the magicians were able to do the same thing with their magic. They, too, caused frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:6-7 (NLT)

To the ancient Egyptians, frogs were sacred symbols of life, fertility and the future. By sending a plague of frogs, God wasn't playing an annoying prank; He was undermining a symbol of Egypt's power and security. Essentially, God was showing that He alone is sovereign over all life and the future.

One of the more humorous aspects of this plague against Egypt is the response of the Egyptian magicians. When God sent the plague of frogs, filling every nook and cranny of the land, the magicians didn't respond with the power to remove the pests—they only succeeded in producing more frogs. Think about it, what's more problematic than a plague of frogs? Simply... more frogs.

The Egyptians' humorous response points to a deeper truth: only God is truly sovereign. Human wisdom, effort or striving can't produce life, secure the future or provide lasting safety—we can only (poorly) imitate what God has already created. The power belongs to Him alone.

At first glance, God's sovereignty might feel limiting. The world tells us freedom comes from control—control over our lives, our circumstances, even other people. But Scripture shows us the opposite. True freedom is found in surrendering to the One who holds all things together.

When we acknowledge that God alone is sovereign, we are released from the crushing burden of trying to hold our lives in our own hands. We no longer have to manufacture outcomes or carry the weight of certainty. Instead, we're invited to rest in His care.

In God's kingdom, His sovereignty isn't restrictive—it's life-giving. It means we are secure even in uncertainty. It means provision is not on our shoulders but flows from His goodness. It means that even in seasons of loss, struggle or waiting, He is still in control, working all things together for our good and His glory. The same truth that steadied the Israelites all those years ago steadies us today. We're not required to be the source of our own life, future or peace. God alone is that for us.

APPLICATION: Where do you need a reminder of God's sovereign power in your life? Take a moment today to surrender those areas and your feelings to His awesome power.

PRAYER: Father, You alone have the power. Today, I surrender my needs, plans and hope to You. May Your faithful love guide, protect and provide for me. Amen.

GOSHEN: A PLACE TO DRAW NEAR

Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree. The only place it did not hail was the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were.

Exodus 9:25-26 (NIV)

The land of Goshen held great significance for God's people. Long before the Israelites were enslaved and cried out for deliverance, Joseph and his family were given Goshen by Pharaoh as a place to settle. The irony is striking. The land was a gift from the very people who would later become their captors.

But it was not a meager gift. Goshen was a rich and fertile land, known for its good pastures and productive fields. Even its name carries a beautiful reminder. In Hebrew, Goshen means *drawing near*. It became a place where Israel could grow and flourish even in the midst of their enemies. There, they could maintain their identity as God's people without being fully absorbed into Egyptian culture.

Goshen was a place of shelter. While flies swarmed, livestock perished, fiery hail struck, and darkness spread across Egypt, Goshen remained untouched. None of the plagues reached those who lived there, because God dwells with His people. Yet Goshen was never meant to be their permanent home. It was a temporary residence, a place of provision and protection during difficulty, but not the inheritance God had promised. Even the future Promised Land God was leading His people toward was not the ultimate fulfillment. The true promise was God Himself, and to dwell with Him forever.

Like Israel, we may experience our own *Goshen seasons*, times when God provides protection, provision and comfort while gently reminding us that this world is not our final home. These seasons are invitations to draw near, to trust His presence in the waiting, and to remember that every temporary refuge is meant to point us toward the lasting home we have in Christ.

APPLICATION: Pause and consider your current season. Where in your life do you feel the Lord is giving you a safe place amid uncertainty and trials? Ask Him today to fill you with hope for the greater promise of Himself, and to show you how you can dwell more deeply with Him today.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for being a God who desires that Your people draw near. I ask that You teach me to know You even more. Draw me closer than ever before. In Your name, amen.

THE GOD OF THE SMALL THINGS

So the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Raise your staff and strike the ground. The dust will turn into swarms of gnats throughout the land of Egypt.'"

Exodus 8:16 (NLT)

All the plagues God sent against Egypt were intentional. They were judgments against Egypt's folly, rebellion and false gods, but they were also insights into the spiritual reality surrounding God's people. Take, for example, the plagues of flies and gnats. Swarms of tiny insects infested everything, bringing havoc and decay wherever they landed.

These third and fourth plagues remind us that God is in control of everything—the seen and unseen, the great and the small, even the things we tend to overlook. And what are insects like these drawn to? Death and decay. The infestation was a visible sign of the deeper spiritual decay consuming the land. Through these plagues, God showed that He alone is Lord over all things, large and small. Nothing is outside His command.

Spiritually, it's often the small things, the hidden attitudes, thoughts and compromises of the heart, which cause great damage. Jesus speaks to this reality in the Sermon on the Mount, teaching that it is the inward state of our hearts that matters to Him, not just our external actions. In God's kingdom, hatred is equal to murder, lust to adultery, and giving for the sake of being seen carries no eternal reward. God is not only concerned with outward behavior but also with the posture of our hearts.

Those *small irritations* in our lives may seem insignificant at first, but if left unchecked, they can lead to decay and destruction. We need God's help not just in the big crises but in the little things, too. Just as the Egyptians were powerless against the flies and gnats, we are powerless over sin, fear and the trials of life without the intervention of a good and merciful God.

But here's the good news: God isn't interested in shaping a people who follow Him out of robotic obedience. He's after our whole lives—our hearts, our desires, and our love. His jealous love is not harsh but kind, and in His kindness, He reveals anything that steals life, joy and growth from us. He is good, and we can trust Him to do the refining work that draws us closer to Him.

APPLICATION: Ask God to reveal the small things in your heart that pull you from Him and trust Him to bring renewal.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for being so intentional with everything, large and small. Search me and know me and show me how to live in Your truth in every way. Amen.

COVERED BY THE BLOOD

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. ...” **Exodus 12:12-13a (NIV)**

The tenth plague was tragic. The first nine had been painful and disruptive, but the tenth was devastating. From Pharaoh’s palace to the lowliest servant’s home, even among the animals, every firstborn died that night in Egypt. Yet as judgment fell on the stubborn Egyptians, God extended mercy to His people—a mercy that pointed to an even greater deliverance.

Each family was told to take a spotless lamb, sacrifice it and mark their doorframes with its blood. The blood would be the sign. When the Angel of the Lord passed through Egypt, striking down the firstborn, He would *pass over* every home covered by the blood of the lamb.

It was a night of both judgment and mercy. The book of Exodus says that on that night, a great wail rose from the people of Egypt. God’s wrath fell, but His people were spared—not because the Israelites were better or more deserving, but because they were covered by the blood of a substitute. This final plague broke Pharaoh’s hardened heart, and he finally relented.

Passover became a defining moment in Israel’s story. Each year, they celebrated it to remember how God had delivered them from slavery and spared them from death through the blood of the lamb. Yet this yearly remembrance was more than a look back—it was also a foreshadowing of something greater still to come. It pointed ahead to Christ. As Paul writes, ... *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us* (1 Corinthians 5:7b NLT). Just as the lamb’s blood on the doorposts saved Israel, the blood of Jesus covers and saves us today.

From beginning to end, God’s plan has always been to bring His children home. Salvation is not a new idea. It has always flowed from the heart of the Father, revealed continually through His love for His people.

APPLICATION: The story of Exodus ultimately points to Jesus, the true Passover Lamb. Take time to reflect on how His sacrifice has covered and delivered you, and let that reality shape how you live each day.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for Your sacrifice and the gift of Your blood. Because of Your sacrifice, I am saved, healed, protected and restored. My hope rests fully in You, and You alone. You are truly amazing. Amen.

DAY AND NIGHT

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. **Exodus 13:21-22 (ESV)**

A few years ago, I began a new chapter in life and found myself facing big decisions, like selling my home and buying another at the same time. A realtor, highly recommended by my neighbors, sat with me at my kitchen table, placed her hand on mine, and said, *God has you covered*. Her words brought comfort, though I had no idea then just how I would come to know and understand them.

God was surely with me in so many ways, working miracles through people who showed up at just the right time, often out of the blue, to help in exactly the ways I needed. Staging, cleaning, clearing out, storing things, making donations, packing, moving and unpacking—all of it fell into place. It felt as though I was simply along for the ride, while my Father in Heaven—who knows all things and sees all things—was orchestrating it all, using my friends and family as His hands in my life.

Being *covered by God* is shown beautifully in Exodus 13, where His presence appeared as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. In other words, He had them covered—day and night—with His divine presence. Pillars are tall, narrow columns, so I imagine the Israelites looking up and seeing cloud upon cloud stacked higher than their eyes could see. And at night, the pillar of fire—its flames reaching upward—gave them both light and a deep sense of security.

These pillars would not have been the norm. They would have been powerful and extraordinary, a comfort and confidence for the people as they made their trek through the wilderness to their new lives.

I'm not special or unique in experiencing God's covering. Big decisions or not, you can rest assured, He's got YOU covered too.

APPLICATION: How do you recognize His presence? In what ways, unique to you, has He proven He is near?

PRAYER: Father, give me eyes to see Your extraordinary presence in my life. Amen

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.

Exodus 13:17-18 (ESV)

According to Dictionary.com, fight-or-flight is defined as *involving or relating to an involuntary response to stress in which the hormone adrenaline is secreted into the blood in readiness for physical action, such as fighting or running away.*

To me, it's the body's way of survival. It's a natural response that can surely get out of control when a person has suffered trauma. I know first-hand the effects of trauma, with one symptom being the adrenaline reaction that kept my muscles from relaxing and prepared me to start running. I had to really think to relax my legs and arms. I was always on high alert.

The Israelites must have been in flight mode, wanting to stay far from any conflict after years of struggling just to survive. It might have felt like living in a war-torn country where bombs go off—adrenaline running high, always watching, always expecting harsh treatment. The last sentence in these verses portrays the people as leaving their enslavement equipped for battle. Their defenses were at an all-time high, and even though they were now free, they were in unknown territory.

Look at what God says in this passage, *"Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt."* He knew the people would be tempted to return to Egypt at the first sign of war. Having just come out of their own struggles, they felt vulnerable and afraid, even longing for the familiarity of their former masters. In their fear, the Lord knew their hearts would tend to turn back to the comfort of their confinement.

God, knowing their past, their tendencies, and their fears, led them toward the Promised Land by way of the scenic route. It was just what they needed after living a life of slavery—the way of His provision, His salvation, His protection and away from the sights and sounds of war.

APPLICATION: Fill in the blanks...Lest I change my mind when I see (something you're fearful of or tempted by) and return to (your past stronghold or addiction). God is leading me by way of (His protection and provision).

PRAYER: Lord, help me find comfort in You and not in returning to my old ways. Amen.

WHERE TRUST BUILDS

And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."
Exodus 14:13-14 (ESV)

Reread that last sentence of this passage. This might be a good verse to engrave on our mantles, print on T-shirts, and commit to memory. In the world we live in, it's difficult to stay silent. It's as if we're forced to have an opinion, an answer, a way out of our troubles, our fears, or pain. But what if we practiced what Moses was asking the Israelites to do?

Moses relayed this message to the Israelites prior to crossing the Red Sea. In Exodus 14:10-12, the people see the Egyptians marching after them. They were so afraid that they questioned Moses' reason for bringing them out of Egypt, saying it would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

I attended a Christian conference a few years ago where the speaker used a vivid, impactful story to explain Psalm 46:10. *"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* (ESV)

Applied to the above passage in Exodus, the story might go something like this:

As the Egyptian army drew closer, a young Israelite girl grew frantic. In her fear, she stumbled across a small, worn-out knife and clutched it tightly. With trembling hands, she began sharpening it, hour after hour, imagining the terrible battle that must be coming. She longed for protection—something, anything, to make her feel less helpless against the danger pressing in. Had she been in her right mind, she would have realized that this little knife could never save her if the Egyptians were to catch up and overtake them.

There's a common promise in Exodus 14:14 and Psalm 46:10 that The Lord will fight for us. We just need to pause—take a breath, quiet ourselves and be still. This is where trust builds—in the moments we see our enemy coming and we're not strong enough or prepared to fight. Our real strength comes when we stop striving and trust our warrior God to fight our battles.

APPLICATION: Do you see an approaching battle of your own? Take one step of trust: hand your fear to God in prayer. And if you know someone else in a struggle, share His promises with them.

PRAYER: God, I need You, and I know You are bigger than any of my problems. Amen.

GOD IS SO GOOD

I will sing the LORD's praise, for He has been good to me. **Psalm 13:6 (NIV)**

I listen to contemporary Christian music and lately I seem to be hearing (and saving as favorites) so many songs about God's goodness...His goodness to me. Having gone through about six years of real struggle and now finding increasing emotional and physical healing, I've become so grateful for every little thing, blessed by provisions of a home, a dog, the ability to work and help people and use my God-given talents, and even for my yard and birds and times to rest and recover—for God's gentleness with me. I just want to sing and sing loud! I know I'm not the only one...do you do it too? Sing out in praise and worship of our great God, our Rock?

Psalm 13 is a psalm of David and is only six verses long. In the first two verses, he asks of the Lord, *How long?* four times. He's asking when God will be near to him again, when He will see him and console him again. So that his enemies don't rejoice over his defeat, David asks the Lord to restore the sparkle to his eyes. I believe he's asking for his joy to return. I have a friend who can always tell when I've gotten my joy back by the sparkle in my eyes. She's intuitive like that.

The last two verses of Psalm 13 almost feel like a whole different story. After pouring out all that anguish, David shifts gears and reminds himself that God's love never fails. He celebrates that the Lord rescued him—and maybe the rescue happened right there in that moment, like he suddenly felt the weight lift and the spark returned to his eyes. Or maybe he was looking back on all the times God had already pulled him through and letting that memory fuel his praise. Either way, you can almost hear the relief in his words, knowing deep down that God is good and trusting that the same God who's rescued him before will come through for him again.

APPLICATION: If you ever need a reminder of God's never-ending love, spend a little time with another chapter... Psalm 136. Read through it and then try adding your own declarations to the list—think of the ways He's helped you, provided for you, protected you or rescued you, and after each one, simply add: *His faithful love endures forever.*

PRAYER: Father God, You are my Rescuer and my Rock. I will sing Your praise today. Amen.

STRONG HAND

Then Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the LORD brought you out from this place."
Exodus 13:3a (ESV)

"O Sovereign LORD! You made the heavens and earth by Your strong hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for You!"
Jeremiah 32:17 (NLT)

These verses are written in remembrance of God's strength and name, and His hand in creation, miracles, deeds, provision and promises. Exodus 13:3 is the first of four occurrences in the same chapter that mention God's hand. By a strong hand, the Lord brought them out... *out of this place* (verse 3), *out of Egypt* (verse 9), *out from the house of slavery* (verse 14), and again *out of Egypt* (verse 16).

The one phrase all these verses have in common is that they begin *with* (or *by*) a *strong hand*. God is all-powerful and His words and breath alone created the world, the heavens, man and all the inhabitants of the earth. Perhaps the idea of knowing more about God's hand will spur a word study of your own. Here are a few references that might get you started.

STRENGTH: He stretches out His hand against our enemies (Psalm 138:7).

PROTECTION: His sheep will never be snatched from His hand (John 10:27-28).

GROWTH: The hand of the Lord is on His church (Acts 11:21).

COMFORT: He holds the believer's right hand, saying, "*Do not fear*" (Isaiah 41:13).

CREATION: His hand made all things (Isaiah 48:13).

LEADING: His hand leads and upholds His beloved (Psalm 139:10).

HEALING: Jesus stretches out His healing hand (Matthew 8:3).

There are so many more verses about His hands or the hand of God...over 100 instances.

Not long ago, I had a few friends over, and we sat around the kitchen table and just bragged on our God and His hand in different situations, His provision, the miracles He had done and the breakthroughs we've had. That's true fellowship that makes us all look at the world a little differently—more alertly on the lookout for God's hand in every situation and in every place.

APPLICATION: Can you see His hand at work in your life? If the answer is yes, have you shared it with someone?

PRAYER: Lord, when I see my hands, let them remind me of Yours and the wonderful things You have done. Walk with me today—I want to go through it as if You're holding my hand. Amen.

THE OTHER SIDE

“This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and He kept it dry until you were all across, just as He did at the Red Sea when He dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD’s hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever.”

Joshua 4:22b-24 (NLT)

Four times in the Old Testament, God parted the waters, and in each instance, there was something on the other side awaiting.

In Exodus 14, God parted the Red Sea through Moses so Israel could escape 400 years of slavery. The destination? Freedom.

In Joshua 3, God parted the Jordan River through Joshua, leading Israel into their promised inheritance. The destination? The Promised Land.

With Elijah in 2 Kings 2, God parted the Jordan so he and Elisha could cross to the place of a miracle. Elijah’s destination? Heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha’s? Witnessing it.

Then, through Elisha, God parted the Jordan again so he could return and step into his calling. The destination? A new phase of God’s plan.

Whenever God moves, there’s always an outcome—a change, a new beginning. I’ve had moments in my own life that I call *God parting the waters for me*.

One of the biggest healings I’ve ever had happened at a Bible study. I’d been dealing with pain and exhaustion for four years, which was thought to be Fibromyalgia. It was so bad I could hardly even chop lettuce for a salad. They prayed over every part of me that hurt, and when I left that night, the pain was completely gone and never came back. The fatigue took a little longer, but a few months later, that was gone too. God indeed parted the waters and brought me into a new place of healing, relief, thankfulness and praise. He gave me a new trust and an empathy for people who experience chronic pain.

APPLICATION: What miracle (big or small) has God done in your life, and where did He take you? Write about it. Share it so that people will know the Lord’s hand is powerful!

PRAYER: Father, thank You that You have plans for me. You are powerful, and I want everybody to know. Make me bold for You and able to share the miracles You’ve done for me. Amen.

IF ONLY I COULD SEE A MIRACLE

At the LORD's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

Exodus 17:1-2a (NLT)

God had done amazing things to free the Israelites from Egypt. Plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, manna and quail from heaven. They had seen God move in mighty ways. On top of that, He demonstrated His presence in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If I were there, I'd like to think my faith would be rock-solid. Who wouldn't believe after seeing all that? Yet when the people got thirsty, they somehow forgot what God had done. They grumbled and complained. They might have thought, *we're not being negative, just honest*. If I'm honest, I'd probably be right there with them. I hate being thirsty. I hate being uncomfortable. And I know I can forget God's past faithfulness when life gets hard in the present moment.

Are you in a place where you have said to the Lord, *if only I could see a miracle? I want to believe in You, but I need to see more*. We want something we can see and touch. But Scripture shows us over and over again that miracles don't guarantee faith.

Jesus healed the sick, fed thousands, walked on water, even raised the dead. Still, many turned away. Some demanded more signs. Others decided to kill Him. Seeing the miraculous doesn't necessarily change a doubting heart.

I like the idea of walking by faith, but I have to admit deep down I prefer walking by sight. Life is often hard and painful. Trust is hard when I'm actually thirsty. But here's the good news: God has already given us the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death was defeated. Life was secured. Hope was sealed. That is the miracle we cling to. And the proof of that miracle continues today. Lives transformed by Christ. Addictions broken. Relationships restored. Hearts healed. My life. Your life. These are miracles of God's power and grace.

Faith doesn't come from seeing more. Faith comes from trusting the God who has already proven His love.

APPLICATION: Walk by faith, not by sight. Don't seek the miracle more than the God who performs it.

PRAYER: Lord, strengthen my faith when I want signs. Help me trust Your power and promises even when I cannot see. And help me stop complaining.

WHERE ARE YOU, GOD?

But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"
Exodus 17:3 (NLT)

Walking with God is not easy in a fallen and broken world. But deep down, many of us still expect that if we are His children and if we do the *right things*, like go to church, read our Bibles, pray, live a good, moral life, then God promises to bless us in the ways we imagine. Doesn't God promise to bless His children? Even Jesus said He came to give us an abundant life. So, when trials come, when disappointments stack up, and pain lingers, we begin to wonder. *Where are You, God? Why are You allowing this?* Some pastors even preach a false prosperity gospel that if we just have enough faith, God will grant us health and wealth. False, but it sure sounds nice. Sure, we know things are going to be hard in this life, but not this hard. Not this disappointing. Not this painful. This is when the enemy whispers in our ear, *The Lord has abandoned you.*

The Israelites were *tormented by thirst*. When we are in pain, whether emotional, physical, financial or whatever, we have choices. We can pour our heart out to the Lord and ask Him to provide for us and give us guidance and peace, or we can complain and accuse God of not caring. Don't fall for the lies of the enemy and question God's goodness and His love for you. Can you hear the difference between, *Are You trying to kill me?* and *Lord, I'm hurting, confused, and I desperately need You?*

One is doubt and complaint. The other is trust and surrender.

Jesus didn't hide the truth from us. He said, *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33 NLT). He never promised an easy life, but He promised His victorious presence in every trial. The abundant life is walking with Him, even in the desert. God's goal is not to spoil us with comfort but to shape us into Christlikeness. Not pampered children, but faithful disciples. Soldiers in His army, strengthened by His grace.

APPLICATION: Resist the temptation to question God's character or His love. Remember the cross. He has already proven His heart for you. Don't accuse Him, pour out your heart to Him. You will find Him faithful.

PRAYER: Lord, please help me in the trials I'm facing today. I put my trust in You.

I DON'T LIKE MY LEADER

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the LORD?"

Exodus 17:2b (NLT)

When we face trials and difficulties, it's easy to complain about everything. We want someone to blame. And since we can't see the spiritual battle going on behind the scenes, we usually aim our frustration at the people right in front of us. Maybe it's your boss who's driving you crazy. Maybe you've thought, *If only my husband would get his act together, we wouldn't be in this mess.* Maybe you're frustrated with your pastor or ministry leader because you don't like how they're handling something. And everyone today seems to be mad at one or both political parties and their supporters. And it's not just that we disagree with them; they're the enemy.

The Israelites had to do their complaining face-to-face. But today, with social media, our complaints can reach thousands in seconds. And sadly, too many Christians have adopted the mean-spirited tone of the world. Some even attack other believers in public forums for everyone to see. And the world is watching. The truth is that leaders are human. They are fallen individuals and messed up, just like the rest of us. Sometimes leaders are mistaken, inapt or wrong. Remember when Jethro advised Moses to delegate leadership because he was wearing himself out? Sometimes leaders need perspective. Sometimes they need correction. Sometimes they even need opposition if what they're doing is ungodly or unjust. But knowing when and how to do that requires great wisdom and discernment. Most of the time, however, what good leaders need is encouragement.

God is the one who allows flawed leaders to lead. He has established institutions like the family, schools, churches, employers and governments for His purposes. When we constantly complain about our leaders, we may actually be complaining against the Lord Himself.

APPLICATION: Search your heart for resentment toward leaders in your life. Don't complain just to vent. If needed, speak truth in love and humbly offer your perspective. And where you're leading, be open to correction and be willing to listen. Encourage one another.

PRAYER: Lord, guard my heart from a complaining spirit. Teach me how to honor those in authority, speak truth in love, and trust that You're at work even through imperfect leaders.

DO I TACKLE THIS PROBLEM OR DO I PRAY?

While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. Moses commanded Joshua, "Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand."

Exodus 17:8-9 (NLT)

God led His people into the wilderness, to this very place, and then they were attacked. Doesn't that feel confusing? *Lord, I thought You led me here. I thought You gave me this job. I thought You brought me into this marriage. So why am I in such a battle?*

And the question arises: *Do I attack the problem, or do I pray?*

For Israel, it wasn't either/or. It was both/and. Joshua went down into the valley with real soldiers to fight a real battle. Moses climbed the mountain to raise the staff of God in prayer. Both mattered. Both were essential.

Some of us are so busy tackling life's challenges that we have little time for prayer or reading our Bible. Mornings are hectic, evenings are exhausting. We live by our own strength and wisdom and wonder why we are worn out.

Others focus so much on prayer and church activity that we forget to do the good works God has prepared for us. We run to every Bible study, every meeting, every event, but we neglect our responsibilities at home or at work or in the world. Truly godly men and women are not only prayerful, they are faithful in action. They provide for their families. They care for their children or grandchildren. They make a difference at work and in the world. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is skip a meeting and go help someone in need.

This story also reminds us of a few key truths:

1. Following God doesn't mean we won't face battles. Expect them.
2. Victory only comes when we depend on Him in prayer and obedience.
3. We all get weary, and sometimes, we need others, like Aaron and Hur, to hold us up in the fight.

APPLICATION: Don't choose between tackling problems or praying. Do both. Trust God in prayer and then act faithfully where He has placed you. And when you grow weary, invite others to walk and pray with you.

PRAYER: Lord, give me wisdom to know when to fight and when to pray. Teach me to depend on You in every battle and to lean on the support of others when I grow tired.

GOD, WHY AREN'T YOU ANSWERING MY PRAYERS?

“For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him.”

Matthew 7:8-11 (NLT)

Be honest. Have you ever thought, *I asked God for a good gift, and I feel like I got a snake instead?* I have. I may not have said it out loud, but I've thought it. Exodus shows us the Israelites facing real problems in the desert. God freed them from Egypt and split the Red Sea, but that was yesterday. Now they are hungry and thirsty. They complained, *God, where are You? Why aren't You answering us?*

Jesus, You told us to keep on asking, seeking and knocking. I'm doing that the best I know, Lord, so why am I not receiving these good gifts You promised?

You have probably heard that the Lord does answer our prayers, and like a good parent, He answers *yes, no, and wait*. I like yes. I rejoice when God says yes. It makes sense to me. Many times, however, I experience *no or wait*, and often I can't tell which it is, but either way, I don't like it.

Looking back, it's easier to see. God allowed Israel to go hungry and thirsty to teach them dependence on Him. He wanted them to learn trust, not self-reliance. He said, *wait*. And in the waiting, He was shaping their faith.

But in the moment, waiting feels unbearable. Silence feels like absence. That's why I love a phrase I recently heard in a Lectio 365 prayer: *God's silence is not the same as His absence*. That's good news. Jesus promised He would never leave us or forsake us. That is true even when His answers are delayed, even when His voice feels quiet. He is present in the silence. He is faithful in the waiting. And He is using every *no* and every *wait* to grow our faith, deepen our trust, and shape our character.

APPLICATION: Keep trusting God even when the answer is *no* or *wait*. Say it out loud: *God is faithful. I will keep walking with You through this trial.*

PRAYER: Lord, help me trust You when Your answer isn't clear. Remind me that silence is not absence. Grow my faith while I wait.

IT WORKED GREAT LAST TIME

So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek... Then they [Aaron and Hur] stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset. As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.

Exodus 17:10a,12b-13 (NLT)

I love this story. Joshua fought the Amalekites with real soldiers in a real battle. At the same time, Moses stood on the mountain, lifting the staff of God with the help of his friends Aaron and Hur. Together, through prayer and action, God gave His people the victory. If I had been there, I think I would have taken careful notes. I'd want to write down exactly what worked so I could repeat it later. After all, Moses and Joshua would face plenty more battles, forty years' worth of wandering plus thirty-one kings to defeat in the Promised Land. Surely this was the formula: one leader fights, another leader prays, and victory comes. But here's the surprising part. God never used this exact method again. Ever.

That's an important lesson for us. We love formulas. Do *x*, and you'll get *y*. Read your Bible this much, pray these exact prayers, follow these steps, and everything will turn out right. But God refuses to be boxed in by our formulas. He's not a vending machine. He's not a math equation. He is the living God. And while He is always faithful, He rarely does things the same way twice.

Think about it: Jesus healed blind men in different ways. Sometimes He spoke. Sometimes, He touched their eyes. Once, He used mud made from spit. Why? To show us that the power isn't in the method but in Him. So don't fall into formula Christianity. God is calling us to relationship, not ritual. He wants us to trust Him daily, to seek Him afresh every morning, to depend on His Spirit in each new situation. Yesterday's instructions may not be today's marching orders. Yesterday's miracle may not be the pattern for tomorrow. The constant is not the formula; it's God Himself. And He's faithful to lead us step by step.

APPLICATION: Don't rely on formulas. Ask God to give you a new direction for this new day. Trust Him to do a new thing in your life.

PRAYER: Lord, I trust You, not a formula. Teach me to hear Your voice. Help me see the new thing You are doing.

EVEN IF LOVE

“...for this is My blood, which confirms the covenant between God and His people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many.”

Matthew 26:28 (NLT)

In our world, most agreements are contracts—written, conditional and voided when one side fails to hold up their end. Miss a payment, break a promise or fall short, and the contract is off. But God doesn't operate on contracts. He invites us into a covenant.

When God established His covenant with Israel through Moses, it was sealed with blood—the blood of a sacrifice. This was more than symbolism. It was a sacred promise, not just signed, but sacrificed into existence. And it wasn't a *you do your part, and I'll do Mine* deal. It was *even if you fail, I will remain faithful*.

To grasp this, imagine a wedding ceremony. Picture someone standing at the altar and saying, *I promise to love you as long as you keep me happy... to stay with you in health, but maybe not in sickness... and to support you financially—so long as you never lose your job*. Sounds funny, but not exactly the love we dreamed of. That's contractual love. It's performance-based and full of escape clauses.

Now contrast that with real covenant love, the kind that says, *For better or worse. For richer or poorer. In sickness and in health. I will not leave you*. These are more than the traditional wedding vows; they're biblical. We trace them back to the very nature of God's love. Marriage is meant to reflect the covenant God made with us: a promise that endures even when we falter.

This is why marriage calls us to a greater love than we can muster on our own. True covenant love isn't found within us, but it can be found in God. It's only by receiving His *even if* love that we can learn to give it.

Moses experienced that love face-to-face. Even when Israel failed, God stayed. And because of Jesus, we're invited into that same enduring relationship.

APPLICATION: Think about the vows you imagine God making to you. Are they based on your performance or His promise? Today, rest in His covenant love. He's not waiting to back out—He's already all in.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for loving me with a covenant love—not dependent on my success, but on Your faithfulness. Teach me to love like You do. When I feel empty or weak, help me draw from Your endless love instead of my own. Amen.

A WILLING HEART

“Tell the Israelites to bring Me an offering. You are to receive the offering for Me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give.” **Exodus 25:2 (NIV)**

When God called His people into covenant, He didn't demand a tax. He invited an offering. The tabernacle, the sacred meeting place between God and His people, was not built from coercion or force. It was formed from the hands and hearts of those willing to contribute.

This wasn't a grab for leftovers. The offerings God requested were items of incredible value: gold, silver, fine linen, precious stones, and rare oils—things that represented wealth, beauty and status. God wasn't asking for scraps; He was asking for sacrifice. Remember, these were a people with a history of being enslaved. So, this sacrifice might not have come from a place of abundance with lots of extras in their closets...in the wilderness.

But the beauty is this: it only came from the willing. Not everyone gave, but those who did gave because they wanted to be part of something holy. They saw the cost of covenant and chose to fulfill it.

In our world, giving is often transactional. We give when we're thanked, noticed or promised a return. But covenant love flips that. It invites us to give because we belong, not so that we belong.

We're still called to bring offerings today. Our offerings are not of fabric and gold, but of time, attention, treasure and trust. And it's still costly. Giving forgiveness when we'd rather hold a grudge. Serving someone who won't say thank you. Choosing honesty when hiding would be easier. Giving the tithe when money is tight. These are modern-day offerings of covenant love.

And just like the tabernacle, God still builds sacred spaces from the offerings of His people—not tents in the wilderness, but moments, relationships and communities where His presence dwells.

APPLICATION: What are you holding that God might be asking you to offer? Offer it today with trust, knowing it becomes part of something sacred, and it's given to someone who has already given to you.

PRAYER: Dear Father, You never force love. But You invite it. Thank You for letting me be part of what You're building. Help me give with a willing heart, even when it's costly, knowing that covenant love always comes with sacrifice. Amen.

GOD MOVES IN

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.”

Exodus 25:8 (ESV)

The tabernacle was more than just a tent. It was God’s answer to a question every human heart asks: *Is God really with us?*

When God gave Moses the instructions, He didn’t just send a list of dimensions and measurements. He showed Moses a pattern, a picture of something holy. This wasn’t a random tent; it was modeled after something divine. It was meant to do more than impress. It was designed to move.

That’s one of the things that makes the tabernacle so unique. It was built to be portable. Unlike the temple that would come later, this holy place could travel. It was packed up, carried and reassembled wherever the people went. While they wandered in the wilderness, the presence of God moved with them.

Even more, it was located right in the middle of the camp—not outside or off-limits. God wasn’t distant. He was close, and that changed everything.

The tabernacle reminded the people that God was both holy and near. He was with them in their journey, not just waiting for them at the destination. It pointed to something even bigger—a God who would not just visit but live with His people. A God who would, one day, take on flesh and *tabernacle* among us in Jesus.

Your life might feel like a wilderness right now. You might be carrying burdens, walking through uncertainty, or longing for direction. The good news is that God is still setting up camp right in the middle of it all. He still moves in. He still draws close.

You’re not alone. And you don’t have to wait until things are settled to meet with Him.

APPLICATION: Where does God want to meet you today? Ask Him. Where do you want to see God move in your life? Tell Him. Invite Him into your life today and picture Him setting up shop in the middle of your life.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You for being the God who moves with me. You are not waiting for me to figure it all out before You draw near. Help me recognize that You are here, even now, and that I can meet with You in the middle of my journey. Amen.

COVERED BY MERCY

"I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you My commands for the people of Israel."

Exodus 25:22 (NLT)

The Ark of the Covenant was one of the most sacred objects in Israel's story. More than just a gold-covered chest, it was a reminder that God was near. Often called the Ark of the Lord or the Ark of the Testimony, it was placed in the Most Holy Place, where no one could enter except the high priest, and only once a year.

Inside the Ark were three things: the tablets of the Law, a jar of manna, and Aaron's staff. Each told part of the story of God's provision and the people's failures. But what sat on top of the Ark was even more important. It was called the mercy seat. That's where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, asking God to forgive the sins of the people.

The message was clear: The Law showed what we had broken. But God's mercy would cover it.

This is where God said He would meet His people, not from the place of judgment inside the Ark, but from the place of mercy above it. God's voice came from above the mercy seat, where blood had been shed.

This beautiful image points us to Jesus. His blood was the final sacrifice. His mercy doesn't just cover our sin temporarily; it removes the guilt forever. When we come to God, we don't stand on our performance. We come because mercy has made a way.

You might be carrying reminders of where you have fallen short. But just like the Ark, God places mercy over all of it. He doesn't meet you with shame. He meets you with grace.

APPLICATION: What part of your story do you believe God couldn't forgive? Bring it to Him today. Picture the mercy seat above the Law, and know that Jesus has already covered it.

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You that I don't have to be perfect to come close. Thank You that Jesus took my place and made a way. Help me live in that grace today. Amen.

BREAD AND BELONGING

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from Me, for My Father has given them to Me, and He is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand."

John 10:28-29 (NLT)

When God gave Moses instructions for building the tabernacle, He included a table. It might seem like a small detail compared to something like the Ark of the Covenant, but the table mattered deeply. It was more than a place to put bread. It helped the people remember a moment when they shared a meal with God.

In Exodus 24, after agreeing to the covenant, the leaders of Israel ate and drank in God's presence. That meal was a celebration of their relationship with Him. So, when God asked them to build a table and keep fresh bread on it at all times, He was saying, *Remember the relationship we started. Keep it close.*

The bread reminded them that God provides. He had already fed them with manna in the wilderness. And now, this table stood as a quiet but constant reminder that He would keep caring for them.

But there's something else worth noticing. Around the edge of the table was a rim, designed to keep the bread from falling off. Even this was intentional. It was a picture of protection. In the same way, God keeps us close and safe.

Jesus picked up on this same idea when He said, *No one will snatch them out of My hand.* That's the kind of security that comes with a relationship with Him. When you belong to God, you're not balancing on the edge, hoping you don't fall. You're held with the strongest and most secure hands in the world.

The table was a place to remember, and still is. It reminds us of a faithful God who feeds, protects and never lets go.

APPLICATION: Where in your life right now do you need to be reminded that God is holding you? Maybe it's in a relationship that feels fragile, a decision that's weighing on you, or a worry that won't let go. Bring that to Him today. Let the image of the table with its protective rim remind you that you're not alone or unguarded. God sees you, and He is keeping you close.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for inviting me to Your table. I don't want to forget how faithful You've been. Help me trust that You're not just with me, You're holding me. I'm safe in Your hands. Amen.

LIGHT AND LIFE

In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 1:4 (NIV)

When God gave Moses the instructions for building the tabernacle, He didn't miss a single detail. One of those sacred pieces was the golden lampstand. Made of pure gold, formed from a single piece, it had one central shaft with six branches extending from it. Like every element of the tabernacle, this lampstand held deep and significant meaning.

The lampstand had a clear job to do. It lit up the Holy Place so the priests could see as they worked. But it meant more than that. This wasn't just a useful object. It was a visual reminder that God was present with His people. It symbolized more than light; it pointed to God as the source of light. Every time the priests looked at it, they were reminded that their ability to serve, see and live all came from Him. God's light led to a fulfilling life.

The lampstand reminded Israel that God alone gives life and light. That truth hasn't changed. In fact, it has become even clearer in Jesus. John wrote, *In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.* Jesus is the fulfillment of what the lampstand pointed to. He didn't just light up a room. He brought light into a dark world and life to everyone who would believe.

Sometimes our days can feel dim. Life feels cloudy. Direction seems uncertain. But the same God who lit up the Holy Place is still shining. And His light isn't just around us. It's within us.

We don't have to guess where to turn or what to do. We look to Jesus. The light still shines. The life still flows.

This Spurgeon quote always challenges me: *The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church. But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! You are the light of the world.* How are you allowing the light of God to influence your life?

APPLICATION: Where do you feel like you're walking in the dark right now? Are you hiding the light of God within you to keep from creating a stir in others? Pause and ask Jesus to light that space with His presence. Let His light bring clarity, and His life bring strength.

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You that we're not walking this journey in the dark. Instead, we have the Light of the World to guide us. Shine into the dark places of my life today and help me to walk in confidence. Remind me of Your nearness. Amen.

FEAR OF DEATH

That same day the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Moab, to the mountains east of the river and climb Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. Look out across the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the people of Israel as their own special possession."
Deuteronomy 32:48-49 (NLT)

Death is a subject few people talk about, but the one reality we all face. I think of the holidays and how they're often the most difficult. One less stocking by the chimney. A missing chair at the table. The reality of death has hit all of us in one way or another. We grieve because of the loss, but we hope because we know those we've lost are filled with immeasurable joy at the feet of Jesus and that we will one day be reunited. As John Piper puts it, *Death is still our enemy. But it is defanged. The viper's poison has been drained away. The deadly sting is gone. The sting of death was sin. And the damning power of sin was in the demand of the law. But thanks be to Christ who satisfied the law's demand. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).* We don't have to be afraid of death because we know that those who are in Jesus are experiencing His resurrection. Closing our eyes in death means being awakened to the glory and splendor of our forever home.

My wife and I have moved three times. Each time was difficult because of the unknown. Where would our new home be? What would it be like? Moving felt dreadful because, at the time, all I could see was the loss. Heaven is a little like this. We love our family, friends, community and church, and the thought of leaving can be overwhelming. However, once you arrive at your future home, heaven, you'll never long for your old life. You'll be thankful for it, but you'll be in the fullness of joy and life, and heaven is a place where there is no more tears or suffering. You can trust God with everything, even your death. So, live each day completely trusting God and let His peace and goodness wash over you!

APPLICATION: Today, rest in the truth that God is holding your future in His hands. Always.

PRAYER: Dear God, please help me number my days correctly. Help me not fear death so I can be fully alive while I'm on this earth. Holy Spirit, I ask You to replace fear with boldness and help me trust in You. Amen.

FEAR OF FAILURE

For though a righteous man may fall seven times, he still gets up.

Proverbs 24:16 (BSB)

Failure. Just hearing that word is rough. It can stir up all sorts of bad feelings, disappointments or shame. Whether failing a test, falling short of a goal, or messing up in a relationship, failure can make us feel like we've lost our worth or missed our calling. But here's the truth: failure isn't the opposite of success—it's part of it.

People today struggle too much with perfection. We believe we don't have to be perfect because Jesus was. This is freeing because it allows us to keep becoming more like Jesus, knowing that we'll fall at times, but that He will change us! Failure reminds us of our need for grace. It humbles us. It strips away the illusion that we can do life on our own. And that's actually a gift.

Today's Scripture tells us that even the righteous fall—seven times, in fact. That's not a sign of weakness, but a part of the journey. What sets the righteous apart is not their perfection, but their persistence. They get back up. God isn't surprised by our failures. In fact, He often uses them to teach, shape and grow us.

Think about Peter. First, he sank while walking on water. Most people teach that as his failure, and to some degree, he did; however, he walked on water for a moment, and there were 11 other people who didn't have the courage to get out of the boat. Peter denied Jesus three times—publicly and painfully. But Jesus didn't write Peter off. Instead, after His resurrection, He restored Peter and gave him a critical role in the early Church. Peter's failure wasn't the end; it was a turning point. The enemy wants you to believe that failure disqualifies you. But God says it can prepare you. It can refine your character, deepen your dependence on Him, and give you a story that speaks of redemption.

So, get back up. Try again. Apologize. Rebuild. Rest in grace. God's not finished with your story—and this chapter isn't the last. Don't play the game, afraid of failure. Play it free. God has forgiven us, so let's spend our lives trusting and loving Him no matter what happens!

APPLICATION: Don't let a fear of failure keep you in the boat. Step out into whatever God is calling!

PRAYER: God, reveal to me my fear of failure. Help me embrace failure as part of the journey. I pray You'd give me confidence knowing You are with me always and turn my mistakes into victories. Amen.

A HEALTHY FEAR

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. **Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)**

Fear isn't something we talk about in the church, especially the fear of God. We're not supposed to be afraid of God, are we? After all, *fear not* is one of the most repeated commandments in all of Scripture. There is, however, a healthy fear of God. This can be defined as a reverent awe for God's holiness and sovereignty that inspires obedience, wisdom and a desire to flee from sin. It's not a terror of punishment, but rather a profound respect and love for God that leads to deeper intimacy and connection with Him. This fear fosters a God-centered life where pleasing God becomes the highest priority of our lives.

- When God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:12), he obeyed, showing reverence and trust.
- When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he refused, saying, *"How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"* (Genesis 39:9 NIV). His fear of God kept him from sinning, even when no one else was watching.
- When God met Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:6), Moses hid his face and took off his sandals because he realized he was standing on holy ground.
- Joshua led Israel with the constant reminder to fear and serve God (Joshua 24:14-15).
- Jesus, Himself, bowed His head with tears of blood and declared, *"not My will but Yours be done* (Luke 22:42 NIV)." His humility and surrender to the will of God are what bring light and life to the world.

When I think about having a healthy fear of God, the gigantic Great Dane my wife's family owned often comes to mind. She was incredibly friendly, loving and even playful at times. However, when a stranger came to the door, this dog would growl and let out a bark that let everyone, even the would-be intruder, know that she meant business. There was no doubt who was running the show.

And so it is in our relationship with God. We're invited to experience His never-ending, perfect love, and at the same time be fully aware of who's in charge. He wants our whole lives surrendered and yielded to Him. He takes the business of holiness very seriously, and He wants us to as well. Love and fear seem to be a healthy recipe for a godly life.

APPLICATION: Pause to think about the holiness of God.

PRAYER: Dear God, help me see You as You really are, that I would walk in Your love and have a healthy fear of Your holiness. Draw me close and help me follow as You lead. Amen.

FAITHFUL TO LOVE

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:28b-31 (NIV)

Ever notice the inconvenience of the day-to-day matters of life? Car repairs (that usually come as a major surprise), long lines in the drive-through (c’mon, it’s called *fast food* for a reason), thunder, lightning and pouring rain at your daughter’s beautifully planned outdoor wedding, ice on the runway, two-factor authentication, smoke alarms that always malfunction in the middle of the night, the list goes on and on. How do you respond when these things happen? I don’t usually get angry. I can usually sluff those off. There are people starving and struggling far worse all over the world, I remind myself. But something happens in my soul as these small annoyances pile up—one after the other throughout the week. These things not only wreck my schedule, they also distract me—slowly lure me away—from the two most important things in life—spending time with God and seeking to meet the needs of others.

There are many, many examples in Scripture of people living out (and not living out) these commandments. One of the greatest examples is Moses, who loved others as he...

- Interceded for the people—even when they wronged him (Exodus 32:32).
- Bore with the Israelites’ complaints and rebellion (Numbers 14:27).
- Taught and led them with great patience (Deuteronomy 30:19).
- Pleaded with God in tears over their sin (Deuteronomy 9:18).
- Inspired the Israelites to endure (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Today’s Scripture is meant to inspire us toward a deep devotion for the things of God. This passage is recentering for me. It’s a call to lift my gaze (attention, devotion and often obsessive preoccupation) from the things of this world and to focus on things that matter most. Let’s face it, some things are more important than others. Let’s become people who are faithful to love.

APPLICATION: Reread today’s Scripture. Allow it to recenter you. Think of one way you can be faithful to love today. Then take action with all your heart!

PRAYER: Lord, Your love is more precious than gold. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Fill my heart with deeper devotion to You and continue growing me into a person who is faithful to love. Amen.

FAITHFUL TO THE END

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.
2 Timothy 4:7-8 (NIV)

In today's Scripture, Paul offers Timothy—his son in the faith—some inspiring and encouraging words to motivate him to keep going. Paul is doing some reflection on the way he lived his life, running and fighting and keeping the faith, no matter what stood in his way. He was prodding Timothy and us to look ahead with confidence, knowing that what awaits us is a crown of righteousness for all who are driven by the longing to see God face-to-face.

Moses is another prime example of someone who endured to the end. Surely, he, along with Paul and so many of the heroes of the Bible, felt, at one time or another, like giving up. Moses wasn't perfect. He failed in many ways. Yet he lived a life of obedience, endurance, humility and unwavering trust in God—even through unimaginable, immense challenges.

The idea of keeping the faith—of not giving up—reminds me of the several years we lived in Detroit, Michigan, one mile away from the city's most violent areas. Yes, Eminem's movie, *Eight Mile*, is no joke. We had three kids under the age of three. For four or five months every year, we lived under gray skies, surrounded by dirt-covered snow and often in temperatures below zero.

There were times I felt like giving up. But what strengthened me and kept me going was remembering Jesus, who *...for the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2b NIV).

Because of the perseverance of Jesus, we too can be faithful to the end.

APPLICATION: In what part of your life do you feel like giving up? Ask yourself what might happen in your life if, instead of distracting yourself or losing heart, you leaned in and took one more step. Give it a try and watch God work.

PRAYER: God, there have been times I've felt like calling it quits. Other times, I just could see a way forward. But You've been faithful, and I know You'll be faithful to the end. Surprise my heart today with Your goodness, that I may be refreshed and refueled to keep going. Help me be faithful to the end. Amen.

FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations... **Deuteronomy 7:9a (NIV)**

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness...” **Exodus 34:6b (NIV)**

Moses was born during a dangerous time when Pharaoh ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be killed. Yet God spared him—his mother placed him in a basket on the Nile, and Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him. From the start, God’s hand was on Moses’ life. God never failed to guide Moses, delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, providing manna and water in the wilderness, and leading Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. Though Moses did not enter the Promised Land himself, God allowed him to see it from Mount Nebo, fulfilling His word that His people would inherit it. The Hebrew word *hesed*, translated in today’s passages as *faithful love* and *abounding in love*, is one of the most beautiful words in the Old Testament. It has been translated 169 different ways in six different English translations. Scholars don’t know exactly what to do with it. Most agree, however, that *hesed* is the defining characteristic of God. Here are a few ways God is faithful, which offer encouragement, comfort and hope.

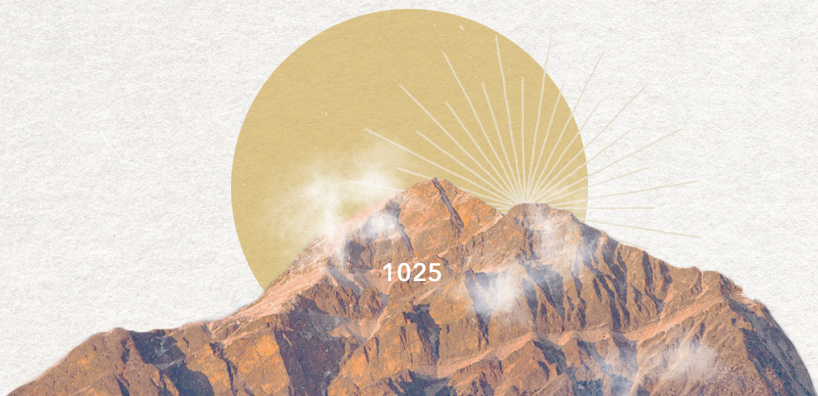
God is faithful...

- In all His promises (Joshua 21:45).
- In forgiving our sin (1 John 1:9).
- In meeting all our needs (Philippians 4:19).
- Helping us in temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- Giving us protection and strength (2 Thessalonians 3:3).
- Drawing near and being constantly present with us (Psalm 34:18; Matthew 28:20).

When I became a follower of Jesus, a Christian friend said to me that at some point, he knew he would let me down. He wasn’t beating himself up or making excuses for his sin. Rather, he was pointing me to the only One who would never let me down. It was an invitation to walk in the faithful love of God.

APPLICATION: Think of ways you’ve experienced God’s faithfulness. Times He was with you and gave you strength and comfort in times you needed Him most. Write these down as a way to reignite your faith.

PRAYER: Lord, You have been faithful through the ages, from beginning to end. As I read the story of Moses, I see Your hand in all his life. As You were faithful in Your love to him, I know You’ll be faithful in Your love toward me. Help me become more aware of Your presence, that I may be filled with strength and hope and love. Amen.



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